KONTRATT
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THE AUTHOR OF 'THE MIRROR' PRESENTS
SIGNED IN BLOOD

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Hash Black

Prequel

It's true what they say, I guess. Life does flash before your eyes when death casts its glowing gaze upon your face.

You would expect my screams to pierce the night as I witnessed the gore inside death's mouth. You would expect me to seal my eyes tight and cry as I anticipated my fate.

I would too.

But no. It didn't happen quite like that.

I stayed mute. All emotions washed from my face as I awaited the inevitable. Its jaws were jagged and putrid as they enveloped my head, enclosing me in a heavy shroud of eternal darkness. The pain, as unbearable as it was, lasted for a split second as its teeth crunched at my ribs and sent blood spurting from my bare lungs and gushing from my mouth. And right then, I tasted it.

Death.

It was bitter. Metallic. Nauseating as my soul tore through my body. Like barbed wire being yanked from a soggy blob of decaying flesh.

It hurt. The pain was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. And as my soul clung desperately to my withering body, unwilling to depart its shell, I saw it all. Memories of how it all began. The horror that would eventually devour my soul and bring an end to my tormented years of waiting.

"Clementina. Clementina, darling. Wake up, Clementina. Clementina?"

They say you should never wake a child from sleep. But the circumstances that pushed Mother to such an atrocity that night were nothing short of dire.

Her voice was but a distant whisper as it registered through my faculties. Nonetheless, it pulled softly at me, soothing me back to reality from the sweet paradise of an eight-year-old's slumber. Her face was a fuzzy blur in the dark as I came to. The dim light from the crack of my door lit up the fringes of her head like a halo. I barely noticed the urgency in her voice until she shook me by the shoulders and tugged me back to reality.

"Clementina! Wake up now, darling. You must wake up."

Mother finally came to focus as I looked up at her through groggy eyes.

"Mother?" I said, "What's happening?"

With haste, she grabbed my arm, pulling me out of bed, "You

must wake up, darling. You must wake up so we can pray."

"Pray?"

I stumbled behind Mother with wobbling legs. My upper arm was still in her firm grasp as she half dragged me out of my room and into the church corridors. They were empty as we trotted to the small, candle-lit, square prayer room. It was here where the other nuns would seclude themselves from the world and devote their time to the heavenly Father. But on that particular day, only my two sisters lined its fore, kneeling before the cross with their long, white nightgowns trailed behind them. Their hands were clasped earnestly in front of their faces as their rushed whispers filled the room.

I squealed in agony as my mother's grip left my arm. I kept looking around, sleep slowly dissipating from my head.

Everything is out of order. Nothing makes sense.

I felt Mother's hands on my shoulders, gentle this time, as she knelt before me. Her touch was cold and shaky over my skin. And as I looked at her, I noticed the dark, sagging bags below her eyes. Though her hair was tied back, rogue strands sprouted in all directions.

Mother's voice was a tired rasp as she spoke, "Close your eyes and pray beside your sisters, darling. Pray with them. Pray for them. Pray for all of us. Pray." She sniffed as a tear trickled down her face. But she quickly erased its trail, removing all evidence of the fear on her face.

"But Mother-" I began to protest.

"Remember, whatever happens, whatever you hear, don't stop. Please, never stop. Never stop until I come back for you. Until I come back for all of you."

"Mother?"

She inched closer and planted a kiss on my cheek before rising back to her feet. A weary smile crept over her face as she walked backward and shut the double doors before her exit. I will never forget that tear I saw flowing down her cheek just before she shut those doors. Who knew that would be the last time I would ever see it?

That's when the wretched screams started.

I had never felt fear as I had on that very day. It engulfed me, swallowing me whole in the confines of the suffocating, windowless room. My body shivered in the heat of the night, gallons of sweat pouring down my face. My stomach churned and walloped underneath my core, threatening to expose the ingested remains of

my early dinner.

My knees ached over the hard concrete. But I dared not flinch in fear of the monsters that prowled amongst us. I could hear them howling in the distance, whispering in my ear. Their raspy voices were as malicious as their vile suggestions. Suggestions far too terrible to utter out in the open.

I kept my fingers intertwined, clenched hard over my lips, seeking protection from the almighty Father. I closed my eyes tight, but the screams were so loud. The howls were too ominous. And the whispers too wretched. I struggled to hear my own prayer as eerie sounds clogging my faculties.

Scream!

That was no demon. I realized. *It wasn't Mother's either.*

It then dawned on me.

Is this happening again? Like it did in the past? *An exorcer-exorcism!*

I shuddered at the thought.

The scream came again. Louder this time.

I prayed harder, calling out to the Virgin Mary to protect our souls from the evil among us. But the voices. The vile, wretched voices…

"Open your eyes," one rasped. "Gaze upon the anointed one."

"No!" I shouted.

But it wouldn't relent. The whispers grew louder. So loud that I could bare it no longer.

I unclenched my hands and wrapped them around my ears, curling over myself as an involuntary voice boomed from my lungs, "Enough! Stop it!"

Suddenly, there was silence. The voices were gone.

Peace. Serenity. Tranquility.

I did it.

I shot up to my feet in triumph, but my heart stopped at the abomination that stood right before me.

The cross… it's not supposed to hang that way.

Then I felt it, the evil presence amongst us sending ripples of fear underneath my tender skin.

I turned to my sister who knelt next to me. Her eyes were brilliant with shock, gleaming with dismay at the overturned cross.

"Ethelinda," I whispered. "Wha… what does it mean?"

My sister turned toward me. The look on her face had terror cast all over it.

"Mmo… Mother- Mother warned us. Sh- she said not-"

A choking sound interrupted her, and she turned to check on Kezia. She had her hands over her throat, gasping for air as she

slowly took to her feet.

No. She had levitated off the ground.

Soon, she was dangling in the air, the horror of her choking sounds filling the room. She kicked and bucked before Ethelinda and me. We were both frozen stiff with fear. I felt like screaming, but my throat held my voice at ransom.

I turned and saw Ethelinda's slowly rising hand as she tried to protest. Her lips trembled as involuntary moans and sobs escaped them. This was just before the sudden crunching of bones ensued.

My eyes widened at the sight. Death was a foreign concept to me at the time. To have it displayed so gruesomely to the detriment of my very own sister was beyond horrendous.

I stared in dismay as Kezia dangled before me. Blood trickled effortlessly from the opening in her neck where a bone protruded, dampening her white dress and dying it red. Her eyes stared warningly at me as if they were pleading. Pleading with me to turn on my heel and run with Ethelinda.

A hand grabbed me as I tried to approach Kezia.

Ethelinda.

Her eyes were bloodshot. Wide with terror. She shook her head at me and gasped. I clasped my hands over my mouth, lest I scream and aggravate the unseen amongst us. A slit slowly etched over her throat, and I barely felt it as her blood splattered onto my face. I struggled to breathe as the reality of the sight settled before my very eyes. I watched in horror as she sprawled over the floor, coughing up more blood from her lips.

What happened next only took a split second. But through my eyes, it felt like an eternity. Something whisked her up into the air, smashing her hard against the ceiling before letting her limp body crumple back to the concrete floor.

Her blood quickly pooled around my feet.

I edged closer to check on my big sister. The sight finally set my voice free. My screams filled the prayer rooms as I closed my eyes and stumbled back toward the double doors. I turned and fumbled with the handle, but the doors wouldn't open.

"Mama! Mama! Let me out! Let me out!"

I slammed my little palms against the door and screamed at the top of my lungs, hoping Mother would come to my rescue. But there was only silence.

I turned my back against the door and scanned the dreadful silence of the prayer room before me.

No more voices. No movement. Just the flickering of candlelight by the side walls. The front wall was heavily stained with red splatter. My sisters were still crumpled over the floor like

lifeless rag dolls. Their bodies were twisted the wrong way, and the pupils had faded from their eyes. Their blood still flowed freely from their gaping wounds, sending the pool of their blood closer and closer to my bare feet.

A building pressure in my chest sent chasms of pulsed breaths from my lungs. I closed my eyes tight and let out another scream, hoping to will all the gore from existence.

But my scream quickly got stuck in my throat as the doors opened behind my back. I went sprawling backward onto the concrete floor of the hallway, landing hard on my left elbow.

"Mm- Mother?"

She stood over me, covered in blood as it dripped onto my dress. More blood dripped from her lips as she choked out a single word, "Run!"

I staggered back, pulling myself from her with pushing hands and kicking feet. I stared in horror as her chest heaved in agony. But even through that pain, I saw a smile crack over her face.

"I… I lo… I love-"

My screams broke free once more as her neck snapped sideways and her body collapsed over itself.

I stumbled onto my feet and ran the other way, tears streaming down my face.

"A pure soul!" a disembodied voice boomed inside my head. *"Purity doesn't last forever, young one."* More laughter ensued. *"Soon, pure one. Soon, your soul will be mine as well."*

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About the Author

Hash Black is an author with a flair for writing horror fiction. Ironically, his educational background is rooted in marine biology, and has an innate love for coral reefs. However, he has always enjoyed writing his heart out as he grew up. R. L. Stine was a major influence during those days, with Goosebumps and Fear Street series getting lots of traction among his peers. Finally, at the age of 30, Hash gave in to his passion for writing.

Enjoy the fruits of his efforts and support his journey along this winding adventure of writership.